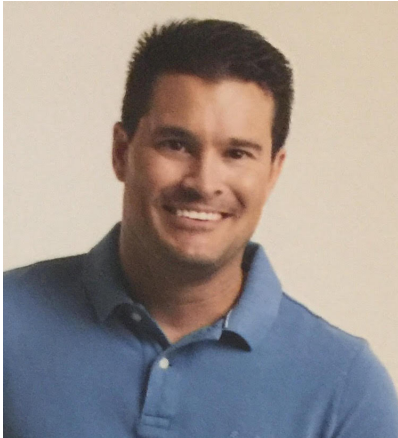


STEPHEN PETRUSKA

OCCUPATION: DHS Behavioral Health Professional, School based



In 2011, while riding his motorcycle, Stephen was struck by a car which caused numerous injuries and severely damaged his left leg. He struggled for almost 10 years with limb salvage in an attempt to save the leg and repair it for normal function before ultimately deciding in 2020 to amputate below the knee in order to live a pain free and active life. Here, he shares his thoughts.

Favorite amputee hacks:

1) If I'm sitting in a tight spot and want some extra leg room, I can get it by removing my leg. 2) A socket makes a great music amplifier – just take off your leg, put your iPhone into the leg/socket with the speaker facing down and jam out to your favorite playlist! 3) If there's no avoiding a puddle, use your prosthetic foot to keep your real foot from getting wet.

The worst advice you've received as an amputee:

I was told once that I should wear long pants out in public because some people may not want to see my prosthetic leg. I pointed out that there is no such thing as an amputee dress code. I rock my prosthetic and am proud of my journey and my body. And any other person living with an amputation or limb difference should be, too!

The worst thing about being an amputee:

Realizing you forgot something in the other room after you just finally sat down and took your leg off is definitely the worst. No fun there.

The best things about being an amputee:

The cool robot leg! But seriously, the friends I've made since becoming an amputee have been the most quality people I have ever had in my life and I'm truly thankful to finally know the true meaning of friendship.

The best advice you'd give someone facing amputation:

First and foremost, know that everything is truly going to be okay. It's a journey that not everyone will face in their lifetime but the personal growth which comes from the journey is limitless. You will move through the journey on your own time. You will adapt and overcome. The limb loss community is an overpowering blend of friends, family, peers and medical professionals that will always be there for you.